A test of personalization of politics in Chile's 2009 presidential election

Un test a la personalización política en la elección presidencial 2009 en Chile.

Juan Cristóbal Portales E., MSc Comunicación Política, London School of Economics and Political Science (jcportal@gmail.com)

Resumen— Personalized politics entails a process where voters` preferences are no longer attached to the preferences of a certain political party. Individuals decide who they will vote for by assessing politicians' appearance, personal characteristics and nonverbal behaviour instead of arguments and policy-issue standings. Moreover, this personalization is not exclusively related to voters but also dominates the behaviour of politicians and the media. In order to explore such phenomena in more detail, this article uses the 2009 presidential elections in Chile as a case study. A quantitative content analysis of candidates' press coverage in three major newspapers was conducted in order to determine both the predominant themes behind this personalization trend and the actors causing this personalization. The findings showed clear evidence of a personalization of the political discourse that resulted from the interaction or transaction between voters´ perception of candidates' personalities, the candidates´ self-reported traits, and how the news media emphasised these traits.

Keywords: **personalization,** politics, media, voters, schema theory, transaction process, Chile, presidential election

Abstract— *La personalización de la política se entiende como un proceso donde las preferencias de los votantes se relacionan progresivamente con aspectos como la apariencia, características personales y comportamiento no verbal de los candidatos, desplazando a un segundo plano la afiliación partidaria de los mismos y el debate entorno a programas de gobierno o políticas públicas de relevancia.*
A objeto de explorar dicho fenómeno, este artículo utiliza como caso de estudio la elección presidencial 2009 en Chile. Junto con ello, y a modo de determinar las temáticas predominantes detrás de dicha tendencia y los actores que la influencian, se condujo un análisis de contenido de la cobertura de los principales candidatos en los tres periódicos de mayor circulación chilenos.
Se encontró evidencia clara respecto de una personalización del discurso político propiciado por una interacción entre la percepción que los votantes tienen de la personalidad de los candidatos, los rasgos que los mismos candidatos buscan enfatizar, y la forma en que los medios de comunicación resaltan dichos atributos.

***Palabra**s clave: personalización, política, medios de comunicación, votantes, teoría de esquemas, proceso transaccional, Chile, elección presidencial*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since democracy was restored in Chile in 1989, interest in politics and confidence in political parties has progressively declined (Tironi and Aguero, 1999; Huneeus, 2000). Research by Latinobarómetro[1] (2008) reported a significant decline from the 35 per cent who were confident in political parties in 1997 to only 20 per cent in 2008.

This downturn in parties' approval ratings is directly correlated with the emergence of a deactivated civil society, which replicates similar consumerist social patterns of behaviour that occur in other western societies (Angell, 2003; Silva, 2004).

According to Huneeus (2000), the first symptom of the personalization of political behaviour was registered during the 1997 parliamentary election where candidates were instructed by their advisors to avoid mentioning their affiliation to a party because of the parties' declining image. The candidates were portrayed alone on the campaign advertisements without any reference to their political party. Moreover, they emphasised their personal attributes, and the messages were centred on slogans which neglected any ideological reference as they were focused on showing their ability to "do concrete things for people" (Huneeus, 2000).

This commoditification (cosismo) of the message, along with individualized public images, and the exaltation of personal attributes over the presentation of policy issues in political advertisements became the key element of electoral campaigns (Halpern, 2002).

The same pattern occurred in the 1999 and 2005 presidential elections. In the former, Joaquín Lavín, the opposition candidate and promoter of the 'technocratic discourse and cosismo', obtained a historic result for the opposition coalition with 47.5 percent of the votes[2]. At the same time, 41.6 percent of the people who were reported to have voted for Joaquín Lavín in 1999 had voted for the candidate of the governing coalition, Eduardo Frei, in 1993 (Tironi et al., 2001: 86)[3].

The 2005 presidential election witnessed the rise to power of the governing coalition's candidate, Michelle Bachelet, the first woman president in the history of Chile. Much of her campaign was built on her declared distance from political parties, charisma, and painful past as a victim of the dictatorship (Angell & Reig, 2006: 492).

The media has played an important role in such personalization of Chilean politics. The media in Chile can be characterized as a uniquely commercialized and privatized one. As with changes with political behaviour, transformations in the media system would be also the result of a neo-liberal media model imposed by the military regime (Moke, 2004). Communications infrastructure was modernized, the relationship between the media and political parties was suppressed and private media ownership was encouraged (Tironi and Sunkel, 1993: 243-244).

What used to be a politically-involved media, which had been close to political parties during the dictatorship years, was transformed into a depoliticized one. At the same time as it became the political system's watchdog, it put its emphasis on the portrayal of politics through the charismatic features of politicians (Tironi and Aguero, 1999). Within this process, politicians have been pushed towards marketing techniques and individual campaign managers to construct and manage their main assets and traits (Moke, 2006).

Also, as voters' confidence in political parties has declined and their voting options are progressively trait-based, politicians rely more on empirical methodologies (e.g., polling) to assess voter perceptions (Angell & Pollack, 2000: 377). Politicians representing specific traits thought to appeal to the political environment of the time have successfully performed in different campaigns and scenarios since 1997.

Finally, voters´ influence in shaping media content according to their personalized agenda is exemplified through the dramatic disappearance of historical newspapers attached to several political parties and movements. Thus, a transactional influence between all these groups is the appropriate way to explain personalization trends in Chilean politics.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING THE DEBATE IN THE CHILEAN CONTEXT THROUGH A TRANSACTION MODEL OF AGENDA-SETTING

The aim of the present study is to examine to what extent such personalization of Chilean politics grounded in politicians' "personality" characteristics rather than on issues can be confirmed. Secondly, this research attempts to identify the main actors influencing such personalization and whether a transactional influence between the groups can be found. The 2009 presidential election in Chile will be used to address both questions.

For the first question, the article explores the level of personalization of the campaign by considering whether the political discussion of the election sustained in the news media is mainly focused in policy issues or the candidates´ personalities.

To assess the prevalence of personal traits in the political discussion of the campaign, certain cognitive representations of presidential candidates reflecting performance-re-

levant criteria such as competence, integrity and reliability, as well as their charisma and personal characteristics and life (see Appendix 1 to review source and list of codes used to define the candidates´ personality), will be considered. These cognitive representations or schematic assessments are based in the 'schema theory' which puts forward the argument that people consistently evaluate presidential candidates on the basis of a 'pre-existing knowledge structure, or schema, concerning what a president should be like, and judge real candidates according to how well they match the elements of these schemas' (Miller et al., 1986)[4].

Schema-trait theory counters traditional models such as those presented in 'The American Voter' (Campbell et al., 1960), which said that candidates' campaigns and their assessment by voters and the media would be dominated by a party-issue focus. In their studies on voters' behaviour in the United States and Italy, Caprara & Zimbardo (2004) confirmed that people process information about candidates in a schematic fashion, and traits play a particular role in organizing knowledge and political preferences. Moreover, they were able to outline a correlation between voters' privileged traits, voters' perceptions of leaders' personalities based on those traits, and politicians' self-reported traits (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004: 590).

In order to identify a transactional relationship between the candidates, the media and the public which influences their personalized agendas, a study on the degree of control each one of these groups exerts on how the news media reports key details about candidate's personal attributes will be conducted.

Finding a correlation between how people assess the candidates, the way the media frames candidates, and candidates' emphasis on certain traits entails accepting that the personalization of the presidential campaign is a dynamic process involving an interaction or transaction between individuals, the media and the candidates[5] (Bauer, 1964; Becker & Kosicky, 1995).

The 'transaction model' posits that the assessments of candidates' personal attributes in the news results from the interaction of various groups. Candidates pre-test their themes with focus groups and opinion polls to evoke a positive public response (Altschuler, 1982; Salmore & Salmore, 1989). Similarly, the public may bring its own themes and perceptions to the candidate's agenda, but they are also shaped by the candidates' performances and the media coverage of the campaign. Even if the media or specific newspapers have their own agenda, their reporting is constrained by the candidates' actions

and their readers' interests (Dalton et al., 1998; 465).

The transaction model suggests a strong correlation between media content and public interest (and the themes and attributes projected by the candidates), but this correlation is not evidence of media causation. Therefore, if the news media is focused on the personal attributes of candidates, this can be explained by the convergence of a common agenda between candidates, the media, and the public.

The transaction model differs from the media-centred model that explains public and candidates behaviour as the result of a one-way transfer of the themes they prioritize from the media to the public and politicians (McCombs, 2004).

Major campaign studies and surveys have found a high agreement between the interests of the public and candidates and media content with different samples and under different media conditions (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McLeod et al.,1974; Semetko et al., 1991). Moreover, further studies have identified a correlation between the candidates' personal characteristics and traits which are emphasized by the news media and the importance of these attributes to the public agenda (McCombs et al., 2000).

This study does not challenge such correlations. But it disagrees with the causation pattern they establish. In agreement with Dalton et al., (1998) if the media, politicians and the public all have the same agenda, this can not be considered as evidence of causation by the media. Whether the media is exercising an independent causal role in determining the personalization of politics can only be assessed if its agenda is distinctive from that of the public and politicians.

The way this article will distinguish who is framing the news media content within the news media coverage of the presidential election will be to differentiate between media-initiated reporting and articles initiated by candidates and to compare their themes with the public's registered assessments of those themes (Dalton et al., 1998: 466).

It is also important that, in order to compare media-initiated and candidate-initiated press coverage with the public's image of the candidates, and identify a transaction process explaining the personalized agenda of the campaign, the following hypotheses should be advanced:

- H1: Both newspaper coverage and candidate comments on personality exceeded the amount of newspaper coverage and candidate comments on policy issues.
- H2: News media applied the same schema based on a permanent set of personal attributes to report and assess the candidates' campaign as the schema used by

4. Miller et al. (1986) conducted an empirical study of the voters' cognitive representations of presidential candidates, derived from responses to open-ended questions in the American National Election Studies from 1952 to 1984, and concluded that the perception voters have of their candidates is consistently based on personal traits rather than on policy-political issues.

5. The seminal 1952-1984 U.S. presidential elections study by Miller et al.(1986) clearly identified such a correlation. During these campaigns the candidates emphasized certain characteristics which highlighted how their competence, integrity and reliability were fitting for the office and crucial for voters. In turn, voters responded to those campaign messages because they were related to their schema for presidential candidates. Finally, the media was a key factor in enabling the public to make inferences about the competence and charisma of the candidates.

candidates to profile themselves to voters.
- H3: Both newspaper coverage and candidate comments on opinion polls exceeded newspaper coverage and candidate comments on policy issues.
- H4: After the CEP survey was published, both newspapers and candidates gave more importance in their agendas to the personal traits of the candidates that received the worst assessment from the survey respondents.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to test these hypotheses, data from a detailed content analysis of three major Chilean newspapers was combined with a secondary analysis of a public opinion poll conducted during the campaign.

Content analysis as a quantitative and systematic method allows one to 'describe and analyse media content in a comprehensive way, less prone to subjective selectiveness and idiosyncrasies' (Hansen et al., 1998: 91). It has often been used to reflect social and cultural issues such as the predominant content of political campaigns occurring in different contexts (Deacon et al., 1995; Dalton et al., 1998).

This method not only serves the purpose of counting the occurrences of specified characteristics or dimensions of texts, but it also analyses the relationship between these dimensions when related to specific phenomena.

This research included a content analysis of three representative Chilean newspapers. Also, as a national opinion survey was considered, it was important to conduct an analysis of content originated from major outlets.

The national opinion survey used in this research was the one conducted by the Centro de Estudios Publicos (CEP) (2009). The CEP is a non partisan, private, non-profit academic Research Centre that carries out Chile's most comprehensive and reliable election surveys. The survey was conducted between 14 May 2009 and 3 June 2009. It was a face-to face survey, conducted among 1,505 Chilean citizens of age 18 or older. The method used was a random sample of the whole population, including urban and rural areas. The response rate was 88 percent. The sampling error was plus or minus 3.0 percentage points at the 95 per cent confidence level.

The newspapers chosen were 'La Tercera' El Mercurio' and 'Las Ultimas Noticias'. As identified by the Local Bureau of Circulation, they have the largest circulations in Chile and differ in their target readership. 'La Tercera' is the educated middle class newspaper, 'El Mercurio' is the upper middle class newspaper, and 'Las Ultimas Noticias' is Chile's most widely read tabloid.

In order to test the advanced hypotheses, the researcher analysed a period of four weeks during the presidential campaign. As the national survey was conducted during the period May-June 2009, and published on 19 June 2009, the monitoring started on 5 June 2009 and ended on 2 July 2009.

The consecutive-day method of sampling was used to ensure validity but also to compare the variations in the portrayal of candidates' personal attributes in campaign-initiated and media-initiated articles before and after the CEP national opinion survey took place. This sampling method is 'very easy and convenient to use, and different weekdays may be represented' (Riffe et al., 1993).

Nevertheless, it should be said that, compared with the constructed-week method, this method does not allow greater generalizations over time. Nor does it allow for the variation in newspaper readership over a week or the possibility of overrepresentation in certain editions (Riffe et al., 1993). However, practical constraints, such as time, have to be taken into consideration, and as with most studies, the researcher has to prioritise what is feasible and most assists with the objectives of the research (Deacon et al., 1999).

Starting on 5 June 2009 - fourteen days before the national opinion survey was published - and ending on 2 July 2009 - fourteen days after the same poll - every article in each of these three newspapers was content-analysed. The articles selected mentioned the two main presidential candidates, Eduardo Frei and Sebastián Piñera.

According to the results obtained from the national opinion survey, these two candidates were largely leading the voting intentions of survey respondents[6].

The unit of analysis was the individual article, including journalists' media reports about the candidates' campaigns, news analysis, interviews with candidates conducted by the press, political analysis, editorials, opinion columns, letters to the editor, and any other article which corresponded with two or more of the previous categories.

The articles were obtained from 'El Mercurio's' internal database for its employees. This was the only complete electronic database at disposal for research on the three newspapers' predefined articles. The search term entered in the database was: Frei or Piñera.

The consecutive-day process resulted in a sample of 64 issues and 252 individual articles to be coded.

For each article the researcher coded up to five different narratives. The term ´narrative´ describes a separate story within an article: one of the candidates in any given

6. Survey respondents were asked 'If the presidential elections were conducted next Sunday, and the candidates were the following ones...for whom would you vote]?' From those respondents registered to vote, 37% said they would vote for Sebastian Piñera, and 30% said they would vote for Eduardo Frei. These two were followed by Marco Enriquez-Ominami, who received just 13% of people's preferences.

7. Specifically, the CEP survey asked: 'Name the three mayor problems to which government should dedicate its best effort to solve'. The response choices used in this study were: Crime, health, employment, economy, education, salaries, poverty, drugs.

situation referring to a certain subject (e.g. Eduardo Frei accusing Sebastián Piñera of dishonest conduct followed by Sebastian Piñera countering that accusation would be coded as an article with two different narratives).

Each narrative was considered as a new article. They were coded for the type of article-story as either candidate-initiated or media-initiated (in some articles there were different narratives with a distinct type, whether initiated by the candidates´ campaign or by the newspaper). The narratives were also coded for their candidate focus, their main actor, and their main subject or narrative.

The narratives were also coded for their candidate focus, their main actor, and their main subject or narrative.

To analyse the main narrative, the researcher coded each article's narrative within one of these categories: policy issues; candidate personality; other topics. Within the policy issues category, the researcher constructed seven major issues. These subcategories were based on the first seven issues identified by people in CEP national survey as the most important policy issues on which the government should focus[7]. For the candidate personality category, up to five personal attributes were constructed, each one with its own sub-categories. These categories and subcategories were based on a set of thorough schematic categories of the personal dimensions of candidates, derived from a coding book constructed by the American National Election Studies (see Appendix 1)[8]. Finally, articles not referring to any of the previous two categories were coded within one of the sub-categories in the ´other narratives´ category.

Instructions on how to conduct the content analysis and to code each item were detailed in the content analysis coding schedule. Two coders conducted the content analysis, the main author of this study and a graduate student with experience in policy research studies[9]. Both coders had a knowledge and understanding of Chilean politics.

To assess the reliability of the analysis, Holsti´s intercoder reliability (1969), based on a random sample of 10 percent of the narratives, was applied. The result was a high 88 percent[10].

The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. To test the hypotheses and conduct further correlations and considerations, descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and cross-tabulations, were applied. They were also used to determine the effects of public perceptions of candidates personalities detailed in the CEP national opinion survey on news coverage and candidates' campaigns[11].

These descriptive methods were also helpful in establishing whether newspaper emphasis on candidate personalities, and candidates' self-reported traits and cognitive representations, changed after the CEP poll.

Finally, the most comprehensive public opinion survey in Chile conducted by a private, non-partisan, non-profit academic foundation was used in this study to complement the content analysis.

The objective was to identify the main public descriptions of presidential contenders' attributes and whether the media coverage of the elections and candidates agenda and self-reported traits were influenced by the perceptions of voters. By carrying out this correlation, the researcher was able to determine the extent to which the eventual personalization of the election could be understood as the result of the transaction process, in which candidates, the media, and the public converge on the common agenda of salient cognitive representations and personal traits which define a campaign.

Previous studies have arrived at different conclusions on the relationship between the public's agenda and that of the candidates (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Semetko et al., 1991; Dalton et al., 1998; Valenzuela & Correa, 2009). But some of these studies have focused on local studies rather than national coverage of elections and national opinion surveys.

Finally, and in order to address the potential inconsistencies of this study, this researcher compared findings through different methods and sources. Content analysis and a national opinion survey were assessed against each other to validate the research hypotheses.

4. RESULTS

Do the claims about political personalization in Chile relate to a real development? Moreover, through analysing the presidential campaign, is it possible to qualify the personalization of Chilean politics as a media-caused phenomena? Or, on the contrary, can it be explained as a more complex process resulting from the interaction between voters' perceptions of candidates' personalities, candidates' self-reported traits, and news media emphasising these traits?

The analysis indicates that a process of political personalization is occurring and is being promoted and conducted by an active and permanent transactional process between the public, politicians and the media.

4.1. The personalization in the candidates' and media campaign agenda

In order to support Hypothesis 1 that both newspaper cove-

8. The coding book was part of a piece of research conducted by the American National Election Studies to determine voters assessments of presidential candidates in the US national elections from 1952 to 1984 (Miller et al. (1986)).

9. Dr. Andres Roman, MSc IHP, London School of Economics and Political Science

10. CR=2M/N1 + N2, where CR is the coefficient of reliability, M is the number of coding decisions agreed on, and N1 and N2 are the total number of coding decisions made by each other.

11. To measure how the public related certain personal characteristics to each of the two main candidates, a set of questions was used by the CEP survey (each one put by this researcher into one of the schematic sub-categories used in this study's content analysis to evaluate the presence of candidates' personalities as the main subject of newspapers articles). The questions selected from the survey were: name the candidate you trust more to handle the following problems: economic crisis, health, crime, inflation, education, public transport, unemployment? (Reliability as a man you can trust with the responsibilities of government); Would you say [name of the candidate] is sincere or tricky? (Integrity as honest, sincere, not tricky; Integrity as honest/ dishonest government).

Table 1. Total Content of Narratives in cadidate-initiated and media-initiated articles (in percentages)

	Article´s Main Narrative		
	Policy Issues	Candidate´s Personality	Other Issues
Candidate-Initiated Articles and Media-Initiated Articles	15.5%	50,8%	33.7%
(Valid Cases)	(39)	(128)	(85)

Note. Table entries are the major themes in articles initiated by the candidates and the media covered by the three newapapers. The unit of analysis was a narrative within and article. The focus of the artcle was one of the candidates of both. The number of valid cases are equal to the numbers narratives.

Table 2. Content of narratives in media and candidate- initiated articles

	Valid Cases	Percent
Candidate-Initiated article *Article about candidate referring to policy issues identified by people in CEP Poll where govermment should be more focused.	18	7.1%
Candidate-Initiated article *Article about candidate´s personality.	53	21.0%
Candidate-Initiated article *Article about campaign and policy issues distinct from CEP Poll issues and candidate´s personality.	35	13.9%
Media-Initiated Article *Article about candidate referring to policy issues identified by people in CEP Pol where goverment should be more focused.	21	8.3%
Media-Initiated Article *Article about candidate´s personality.	75	29.8%
Media-Initiated Article *Article about campaign and policy issues distinct from CEP Poll issues and candidate´s personality.	50	19.8%

Note. Table entries are the major disaggregated themes in articles initiated by the candidates and the media covered by the three newaspapers. The unit of analysis was a narrative within an article. The focus of the article was one of the candidates or both. The number of valid cases are equal to the numbers of narratives.

rage and candidates' comments on their personalities would exceed the newspaper coverage and comments by candidates on policy issues, newspaper articles were classified into media-initiated articles and articles initiated by actions of the candidates' campaigns.

For the first category, a subset of articles matching the following criteria was created: journalists and media-initiated reports about the candidates' daily activities or statements, news analysis, interviews with candidates, political analysis by reporters or political correspondents, opinion columns, the editorials of each newspaper, letters to the editor or any other article which included two or more of these criteria. 146 narratives met these criteria.

On the other hand and in order to classify the articles initiated by actions of the candidates' campaigns, the following categories were considered: articles referring to the candidates' activity, press releases by them and press conferences or direct statements that they made to the press. The total number of valid narratives matching these criteria was 106.

Table 1 presents the total content of narratives in articles initiated by both candidates and the media. The most frequent narrative within the total of 252 analysed articles was the personality of the candidates (51 per cent), which was three times the amount of articles on the policy issues mentioned by people in the CEP survey.

Therefore, there is convincing evidence to support the belief that the agendas of both candidates and the news media had been personalized, following the pattern of previous personalized elections starting in 1997 (Huneeus, 2000).

Moreover, when the percentage of total coverage devoted to each of the narratives is compared (see Table 2), a parallel is found between the general categories of narratives prioritized by the candidates and the media. From the total number of narratives (252 valid cases), the personality of the candidate was the most frequent story in both candidate and media-initiated articles. These narratives were followed in second place by stories concerning issues distinct from those highlighted by the CEP survey on policy issues and the personalities of the candidates, and finally by the CEP survey policy issues.

However, if the intention was to establish whether news media applied the same schema based on a permanent set of personal attributes to report and assess the candidates' campaign as the schema reported by candidates to promote themselves to voters (Hypothesis 2), further analysis was needed.

To illustrate this correlation, a comparison was made between the frequency of narratives referring to the competence and personal life of the candidates in candidate-initiated articles and those in media-initiated articles.

Table 3 shows this correlation. From the total number of narratives (252 valid cases), 6.3 per cent of them referred to the candidates' competence and were initiated by the candidates' campaigns, and nearly 5 per cent of them were related to the same attribute and initiated by the news media.

The same correlation is found when comparing narratives related to the personal life of the candidates. 6.7 per cent of the total of analysed articles referred to the candidates' personal life and were initiated by the candidates' campaigns, and 6 per cent of them, a similar tally, were related

Table 3. Candidate and media- initiated articles where the main narrative is referred to the competence and personal life and characteristics of the candidates (in percentages).

	Valid Cases	Percent
Candidate-Initiated Article *Competence	16	6.3%
Candidate-Initiated Article *Personal life and characteristics	17	6.7%
Media-Initiated Article *Competence	12	4.8%
Media-Initiated Article *Personal life and characteristics	15	6.0%

Note. Table entries are the themes reffering to the competence or personal life and characteristics of the candidates in articles initiated by the candidates and the media covered by the three newspapers. The unit of analysis was a narrative within an article. The focus of the article was one of the candidates or both. the numbers of valid cases are equal to the numbers of narratives.

Table 4. Total content of narratives by theme in candidate and media-initiated articles (in percentages)

Candidate and media-initiated article *Crime	Valid Cases	Percent
Candidate and media-initiated article *Health	7	2.8%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Employment	16	6.3%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Education	1	4%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Salary-economy	7	2.8%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Poverty	4	1.6%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Drugs	3	1.2%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Competence	1	4%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Integrity	28	11.1%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Reliability	25	9.9%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Charisma	9	3.6%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Personal life and characteristics	31	12.3%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Other campaign issues	32	14.7%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Poll Analysis-news	37	12.7%
Candidate and media-initiated article *Other policy issues distinct from CEP poll	16	6.3%

Note. Table entries represent the categories defining each of the three variables mesauring the subject of the article´s narrative covered by the three newspapers. The unit of analysis was a narrative within an article. The focus of the article was one of the candidates or both. The numbers of valid cases are equal to numbers of narratives.

Table 5. Content of narratives referring to the reliability of Eduardo Frei before and after dhe CEP survery (in percentages)

				Reliability	
Candidate Focus	Date			Reliability	Valid Cases
CEP Survey (19.06.09) Eduardo Frei is the main focus	18.06.09	Type of article	Candidate-Initiated	11.1%	1
			Total	11.1%	1
	26.06.09	Type of article	Candidate-Initiated	11.1%	1
			Media-Initiated	44.4%	4
	01.07.09	Type of article	Total	55.5%	5
			Candidate-Initiated	11.2%	1
	02.07.09	Type of article	Total	11.1%	1
			Media-Initiated	22.2%	2
			Total	22.2%	2

Note. Table entries represent the theme referring to the reliability atribute of the cadidate Eduardo Frei covered by the three newspapers. The sum of all total percentages by date is 100 percent = 9 valid cases. The unit of analysis was a narrative within an article. The focus of the article was one of the candidates or both. The number of valid cases are equal to the numbers of narratives. In specific dates there were no registered articles initiated by candidates. The same occurred with articles initiated by the newspapers.

12. To measure how the public related certain personal characteristics to each of the two main candidates, a set of questions was used by the CEP survey (each one put by this researcher into one of the schematic sub-categories used in this study's content analysis to evaluate the presence of candidates' personalities as the main subject of newspapers articles). The questions selected from the survey were: name the candidate you trust more to handle the following problems: economic crisis, health, crime, inflation, education, public transport, unemployment? (Reliability as a man you can trust with the responsibilities of government); Would you say [name of the candidate] is sincere or tricky? (Integrity as honest, sincere, not tricky; Integrity as honest/ dishonest government).

to their personal life and initiated by the news media.

Therefore, similar schematic assessments based on a permanent set of personal attributes are found in news media and candidates. Thus, any possible claims about the media setting the agenda of the campaign and a media-cause explanation for the personalization of the election were discarded.

4.2. A transaction model to explain the personalization of the presidential campaign

The level of agreement that has been shown to exist between the personalized agendas and schemas of candidates and the media is evidence of an interactive process more related to a transaction model than to a media-centred model of agenda setting.

However, this interaction is not complete unless the public's personalized schematic assessment of candidates is considered.

One indirect method of correlating the personalization in the campaign agenda of candidates and that of the media to the interests and schemas of the public is by considering the importance given by both media and candidates to opinion polls.

Candidates incorporate private or public opinion surveys into their strategies along with activities, press conferences or press releases to track issues and themes and improve their communication with the public (De Landtsheer et at., 2008). Furthermore, in order to win an election, candidates need to constantly monitor the public's perceptions and their own performance in an attempt to match their self-reported traits with the traits prioritised by the public (Maarek, 1995; Newman, 1999).

On the other hand, news media, in its struggles to capture the attention of the public in a highly competitive media market, needs to identify which traits and aspects about the campaign or the candidates attract voters the most (De Landtsheer et al., 2008).

Following this logic, Hypothesis 3 put forward the suggestion that opinion surveys, as measures of predicting public perceptions and the candidate traits and campaign themes that they most value, would come up more than policy issues in newspaper coverage and candidates comments.

Table 4 presents the total number of narratives in media and candidate-initiated articles referring to opinion polls, policy issues identified by people in the CEP Poll, categories defining candidate personality, and other issues.

From the total of 15 categories presented in the table, containing all the narratives analysed in this study, 14.7 per cent of them referred to issues about the general state of the campaign or candidates' campaign strategy. This sort of story was followed by those related to news, analysis and comment on opinion polls, and personal aspects about the

candidates, both with 12.7 percent. Such narratives exceeded those about policy issues.

Therefore a correlation was established between the assessment of candidates" personal traits by respondents to the CEP survey and the importance given by the candidates and the media to news reporting on such attributes after the survey.

In order to assess the strength of these findings, another hypothesis was drawn.

Hypothesis 4 posited that after the CEP survey was published both newspapers and candidates would focus more on the personality traits that received the worst ratings from the survey respondents.

To measure this hypothesis, questions from the CEP Survey which measured people's assessment of candidates' personal characteristics were selected.

The two attributes from the survey on which the two main presidential contenders performed the worst were associated to the corresponding two schematic sub-categories used in this study's content analysis to measure whether the candidates' personality was the main narrative of newspaper articles. The attributes matched were integrity and reliability[12].

Table 5 presents the percentages of narratives in Eduardo Frei-initiated articles and media-initiated articles referring to Frei's reliability before and after the CEP survey (published on 19 June 2009). Reliability was, according to those who took the CEP survey, the attribute they least associated with Eduardo Frei. In every issue measuring his reliability, Frei obtained a lower rating than Sebastian Piñera[13].

The total number of valid cases registered was 9 out of the 252 articles-narratives. While only 11 per cent of the narratives referred to Eduardo Frei's reliability before the CEP survey, 89 per cent of stories about Frei were related to this attribute after the poll.

A second case reporting an association between public perceptions of candidates' personal traits and candidates' and media agenda was analysed.

Table 6 presents the percentages of narratives in Sebastian Piñera-initiated articles and media-initiated articles referring to his integrity before and after the CEP survey. This was Mr. Piñera's worst evaluated trait[14].

The total number of valid cases registered was 16 out of the 252 articles-narratives. While 43.75 percent of all valid cases referring to the integrity of Sebastian Piñera were reported before the CEP survey, a significant 56.25% per cent were registered after that poll.

This time, a correlation was proven between the significan-

13. When asked to, 'Name the candidate you trust more to handle the following problems: economic crisis, health, crime, inflation, education, public transport, unemployment', the following results were obtained from respondents: 1).Reliability to handle the economic crisis, Piñera 44%, Frei 29%; 2). Reliability to handle health, Piñera 40%, Frei 36%; 3). Reliability to handle crime, Piñera 47%, Frei 28; 4). Reliability to handle inflation, Piñera 44%, Frei 30%; 5). Reliability to handle education, Piñera 41%, Frei 38%; 6). Reliability to handle public transport, Piñera 43%, Frei 32%; 7). Reliability to handle unemployment, Piñera 44%, Frei 32%.

14. When asked 'Would you say [name of the candidate] is sincere or tricky?' the following result was obtained from respondents: Piñera 31%, Frei 43%.

ce given by people to the integrity of Sebastian Piñera and the amount of that trait in the candidate and media agendas.

Frei and Piñera's cases proved to be useful instruments to test to what extent candidates and the media seek to match their personalized agendas and themes with the public's schematic assessment of presidential candidates.

5.0. DISCUSSION ON THE RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS
Following trends registered in several western democracies, the political discourse about the campaign promoted by the

Table 6. Content of narratives referring to the integrity atribute of Sebastián Piñera before and after the CEP survey (in percentages)

Candidate Focus	Date			Reliability	Valid Cases
Sebastián Piñera is the main focus CEP Survey	08.06.09	Artype	Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	6.25%	1
	09.06.09	Artype	Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	6.25%	1
	13.06.09	Artype	Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	6.25%	1
	14.06.09	Artype	Candidate-Initiated	12.5%	2
			Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	18.75%	3
	19.06.09	Artype	Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	6.25%	1
	21.06.09	Artype	Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	6.25%	1
	25.06.09	Artype	Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	6.25%	1
	26.06.09	Artype	Candidate-Initiated	12.5%	2
			Media-Initiated	12.5%	2
			Total	25%	4
	27.06.09	Artype	Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	6.25%	1
Sebastián Piñera and Eduardo Frei are the main focus	05.06.09	Artype	Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	6.25%	1
	21.06.09	Artype	Media-Initiated	6.25%	1
			Total	6.25%	1

Note. Table entries represent the theme referring to the reliability atribute of the cadidate Eduardo Frei covered by the three newspapers. The sum of all total percentages by date is 100 percent = 16 valid cases. The unit of analysis was a narrative within an article. The focus of the article was one of the candidates or both. The number of valid cases are equal to the numbers of narratives.

media and the candidates was identified as focused on personal traits rather than the discussion of policy issues.

This is especially important in a context in which issues such as the severe economic crisis and its effect on employment[15] would have been expected to play a significant role in their electoral agendas. With a significant absence of such issues and the debate centred on the candidates' personal characteristics, the election can be fairly considered as personalized under the assumptions of this study.

Moreover, this occurrence would confirm a trend towards a political process and elections based in politicians and candidates' personal attributes, previously identified by Chilean scholars (Huneeus, 2000; Angell and Reig, 2006; Angell 2003; Halpern, 2002).

Furthermore, as in former campaigns in Chile (Moke, 2006) and other western societies (De Landtsheer et al., 2008), marketing tools such as polls used to match the candidate's traits with those of the public, were shown to have played a key role.

Another important correlation was identified between the personal characteristics emphasised by the candidates and the media, and the public assessment of those traits.

Consequently, as with the findings by Caprara and Zimbardo (2004) and Miller et al., (!986), the schematic assessments Chilean voters make about their candidates' personal traits would match the attributes and themes which are stressed by the candidates and the media.

The CEP survey and other survey instruments at disposal at the time of this study did not allowed for a conclusion on how people might be prioritizing those set of attributes or on whether people's choice of which presidential candidate to support relied on the candidates' personal traits. But what one can identify is that despite unique indigenous factors, the personalization of the political process in Chile, as in other political systems, would be caused by an interwoven relationship between public opinion, politicians and the media (Ansolabehere et al., 1997; Petrocik, 1997).

This finding counters previous studies about the pattern of causation used to explain the personalization of politics in Chile (Silva, 2004; Valenzuela and Correa, 2009).

For example, Valenzuela and Correa (2009), when analysing the media coverage of a set of personal attributes of the presidential candidates in the 2005 Chilean election, found a correlation between newspaper content and interest by the public. They concluded that news media framed people's assessments of the candidates. In agreement with the transaction model approach used by Dalton et al.(1998), this research posits that the degree of agreement between the public, the media and the candidates on a set of personal traits is evidence against a media-centred model of agenda setting.

Therefore a transactional relationship would be a more accurate way of explaining the personalization of the Chilean presidential election and Chilean politics.

REFERENCES

Altschuler, B. (1982). *Keeping a finger on the public issue: Private polling and presidential elections.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Angell, A. and Pollack, B. (2000). The Chilean democratic elections of 1999-2000 and democratic consolidation. *Bulletin of Latin American Research. 19,* 57-378.

Angell, A. (2003). Party change in Chile in comparative perspective. *Revista de Ciencia Politica 23, 2,* 88-108.

Angell, A. and Reig, C. (2006). Change or continuity? The Chilean elections of 2005/2006. *Bulletin of Latin American Research, 25, 4,* 481-502.

Ansolabehere, S., Iyengar, S., and Simon, A. (1997). Shifting perspectives on the effects of campaign communication. In Iyengar, S. and Reeves, R. (Eds.). *Do the media govern?* (pp.149-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Bauer, R. (1964). The Obstinate audience: The influence process from the point of view of social communication. *American Psychologist, 19,* 319-328.

Becker, L. and Kosicki, G. (1995). Understanding the message-producer/ message-receiver transaction. *Research in Political Sociology, 7,* 33-62.

Campbell, A. Converse, P. Miller, W. and Stokes, D. (1960). *The American voter.* New York: Wiley.

15. According to the International Labour Organization, during the first nine months of 2008, the year when the economic crisis emerged, the national unemployment rate registered an increase from 7 per cent to 7.9 per cent, the highest rate since 2004 (ILO, 2009).

Caprara, G.V. and Zimbardo, P.G. (2004). Personalizing politics. *American Psychologist, 59,* 581-594.

CEP (Centro de Estudios Publicos) (2009). *Estudio Nacional de Opinion Publica, mayo-junio (National Opinion Survey Report, May-June).* Taken June 2009 from: http://www.cepchile.cl/bannerscep/encuestascep/encuestas_cep. html.

Dalton, R.J. Beck, P.A. Huckfeldt, R. and Koetzle, W. (1998). A Test of Media-Centered Agenda-Setting: Newspaper Content and Public Interests in a Presidential Election. *Political Communication, 15,* 463-481.

Deacon, D., Pickering, M. Golding, P. and Murdock, G. (1999). *Researching communications.* London: Arnold.

De Landtsheer, C., De Vries, P. and Vertessen, D. (2008). Political impression management: how metaphors, sound bites, appearance effectiveness, and personality can win elections. *Journal of Political Marketing, 7, 3/4,* 217-238.

Halpern, P. (2002). *Los nuevos chilenos y las batallas por sus preferencias (The new Chileans and the battles for their preferences)* . Santiago: CEP.

Hansen, A., Cottle, S., Negrine, R. and Newbold, C. (1998). *Mass communication research methods.* New York: New York University Press.

Holsti, O.R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and Humanities.* Reading, MA: Addison- Wesley.

Huneeus, C. (2000). *Malestar y desencanto en Chile. Legados del autoritarismo y costos de la transición (Uneasiness and disenchantment in Chile. The authoritarian legacy and the costs of the transition).* Taken from:http:// mirror.undp.org/chile/desarrollo/textos/debates/Chuneus.doc.

ILO (International Labour Organization) (2009). *Panorama laboral 2009: Principales indicadores para Chile (2009 Labour Scenario: Principal Indicators for Chile).* Taken July 2009 from:http://www.oitchile.cl/ pdf/09-04.pdf.

Latinobarómetro 2008 Report. Taken July 2009 from: http://www. latinobarometro.org/docs/INFORME_LATINOBAROMETRO_2008.pdf

Maarek, P. (1995). *Political marketing and communication.* London: John Libby.

McCombs, M.E. and Shaw, D.L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 36,* 176-187.

McCombs, M., López-Escobar, E. and Llamas, J.P. (2000). Setting the agenda of attributes in the 1996 spanish general election. *Journal of Communication, 50, 2,* 77-92.

McCombs, M. (2004). *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

McLeod, J., Becker, M. and Byrnes, J. (1974). Another look at the agenda- setting function of the press. *Communications Research, 1,* 131-165.

Miller, A.H., Wattenberg, M.P. and Malanchuk, O. (1986). Schematic assessments of presidential candidates. *American Political Science Review,80, 2,* 521-540.

Moke, M. (2004). Election campaign in Chile between globalization and national identity. In Lee, L. and Holtz- Bacha, C. (Eds.). *The Sage Book of Political Advertising* (pp.145-159). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Moke, M. (2006). Political advertising in Chile. In Lee, L. and Holtz- Bacha, C. (Eds.) *The Sage book of political advertising* (pp.145-159). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Newman, B. (1999). *The mass marketing of politics.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Petrocik, J.R. (1997). Campaigning and the press. In Iyengar, S. and Reeves, R. (Eds.). *Do the media govern?* (pp.181-194). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Riffe, D., Aust, C.F. and Lacy, S.R. (1993). The effectiveness of random, consecutive day and constructed week sampling in newspaper content analysis. *Journalism Quarterly, 70, 1,* 133-139.

Salmore, B. and Salmore, S. (1989). *Candidates, parties and campaigns: electoral politics in America.* Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Semetko, H.A., Blumler, J., Gurevitch, M. and Weaver, D. H. (1991). *The formation of campaign agendas.* Hillsdale, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Silva, P. (2004). Doing politics in a depoliticised society: social change and political deactivation in Chile. *Bulletin of Latin American Research, 23, 1,* 63-78.

Tironi, E. and Sunkel, G. (1993). Modernización de las comunicaciones y democratización de la politica ('Communications modernization and democratization of politics'). Estudios Publicos. Vol. (52). (pp.215- 246).

Tironi, E. and Aguero, F. (1999). Sobrevivirá el nuevo paisaje político chileno? (Will the new Chilean political landscape survive?) *Estudios Públicos, 74,* 151-168.

Tironi, E., Aguero, F. and Valenzuela, E. (2001). Clivajes politicos en Chile: perfil sociológico de los electores de Lagos y Lavín (Political cleavages in Chile: sociological profile of Lagos and Lavín´s voters). *Revista Perspectivas, 5, 1,* 73-87.

Valenzuela, S. and Correa, T. (2009). Press coverage and public opinion on women candidates. *The International Communication Gazzette, 71, 3,* 203-223.

APPENDIX 1. SOURCE AND LIST OF CODES FOR DEFINING THE CANDIDATES' PERSONALITY NARRATIVE

List of codes from the National Election Studies (NES) presented in Miller et al.'s (1986) study which constitute the five attributes used in this research to define the candidates' personality theme. The final attributes applied in this study were selected from the original list of codes that follows.

Integrity
- 313. A politician/political person; (too) much in politics; good politician
- 314. Not a politician; not in politics; above politics; a bad politician.
- 401. Honest/sincere; keeps promises; man of integrity; means what he says; not tricky.
- 402. Dishonest/insincere; breaks promises; no integrity; does not mean what he says; tricky
- 403. Man of high principles/ ideals; high moral purpose; idealistic.
- 404. Lacks principles/ideals; not idealistic
- 603. Honest government; not corrupt; no 'mess in Washington'
- 604. Dishonest, corrupt government; 'mess in Washington'.

Reliability
- 213. Dependable/ reliable; a man you can trust with the responsibilities of government ('trust' in the capability sense, rather than the honesty sense).
- 214. Undependable/ unreliable; a man you can not trust with the responsibilities of government.
- 319. (too) careful/ cautious
- 320. (too) impulsive/careless
- 407. Public servant; man of duty; conscientious; hard-working; would be a full time President
- 408. Does not take public service seriously; lazy; would be a part-time President
- 431. Unsafe/unstable; dictatorial; craves power
- 432. Safe/ stable
- 709. Good for country; has country's best interests at heart.
- 710. Bad for country; does not have country's best interests at heart

Competence
- 201. General reference to him as a 'good/bad man'; R has heard good/bad things about him; qualifications; general ability

- 211. Experienced
- 212. Inexperienced
- 217. His record in public service; how well he has performed in previous offices
- 218. Has government experience/ political experience
- 219. Lacks government experience/ political experience
- 220. A statesman; has diplomatic experience
- 221. Not a statesman; lacks diplomatic experience.
- 315. Independent; no one runs him; his own boss
- 316. Not independent; run by others; not his own man/boss
- 413. Understands the nation's problems; well informed
- 414. Does not understand the nation's problems; poorly informed
- 415. Idealistic, pragmatic, practical; down to earth; not to idealistic
- 416. Too idealistic
- 417. Uses common sense; makes a lot of sense
- 418. Not sensible; impractical
- 419. (too) well educated, scholarly
- 420. Poorly educated, unschooled
- 421. Intelligent, smart
- 422. Unintelligent, stupid, dumb
- 601. Good/ efficient/businesslike administration
- 602. Bad/inefficient/businesslike administration
- 609. General assessment of the job he would do; he would be a good/bad President, provide good/bad administration
- 707. Candidate as a good protector; will know what to do.
- 708. Candidate as a bad protector; will not know what to do

Charisma
- 301. Dignified, has dignity
- 302. Undignified, lacks dignity
- 305. Inspiring; a man you can follow, a 'leader'
- 306. Uninspiring; not a man you can follow; not a leader.
- 307. People have confidence in him.
- 308. People do not have confidence in him

- 309. Good at communicating with blacks, young people, other 'problem' groups.
- 310. Bad at communicating with blacks, young people, other 'problem' groups.
- 311. Knows how to handle people (at a personal level)
- 312. Does not know how to handle people (at personal level)
- 317. Humble; knows his limitations; does not pretend to know all the answers
- 318. Not humble enough; too cocky/ self-confident
- 411. Patriotic
- 412. Unpatriotic
- 433. Sense of humour; jokes a lot/ (too much)
- 434. No sense of humour/ humourless/ (too) serious
- 435. Kind/warm/gentle
- 436. Cold/aloof.
- 437. Likeable/gets along with people
- 438. Unlikeable/ can not get along with people.
- 439. Democratic (in non partisan sense)
- 440. Undemocratic (in nonpartisan sense)
- 441. High-fallutin/high-brow; talks in circles; can not talk to common man; can not communicate ideas well
- 442. Not high-fallutin/ low brow; talks straight; can talk to common man

- 703. Will save America; America needs him
- 704. Will ruin America; last thing America needs
- 705. Will unite Americans/ bring people together
- 706. Will divide Americans/drive people apart

Personal
- 215. A military man; a good military/war record
- 216. Not a military man; bad military/war record; no military/war record
- 423. Religious; 'moral' (in religious sense); God-fearing
- 424. Irreligious; 'immoral' (in religious sense)
- 425. Self-made; not well off; started out as a poor boy
- 426. Wealthy; rich; born with silver spoon in his mouth
- 443. Well-known
- 444. Unknown/not well-known
- 445. Reference to his family
- 446. Reference to his wife
- 447. His speaking ability.
- 448. His health
- 449. His appearance/looks/face
- 450. His age
- 451. (too) old
- 452. (too) young)
- 453. Mature
- 454. Immature.